

NEWS RELEASE

DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION

Commissioner Claire DeMatteis

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DOC announces results of proactive COVID-19 tests on asymptomatic inmate population

Dover, DE – Implementing proactive measures to identify inmates who may have been exposed to COVID-19, the Delaware Department of Correction (DOC) today announced that it has tested 45 inmates from a minimum housing unit at the James T. Vaughn Correctional Center (JTVCC) where four other inmates have tested positive for the novel coronavirus over the past five days. Of the 45 inmates tested, many with underlying medical issues, eight are positive. All eight inmates are asymptomatic, with no fever, cough or other known symptoms of the virus.

The tests were conducted at DOC's request by its contract healthcare provider on Friday, with the results provided late Saturday evening. Taking additional precautions, by midnight, seven of the eight inmates, who had been moved on Tuesday evening, April 7th, to single cells and provided face masks, were transported to the JTVCC COVID-19 treatment center building, along with two other COVID-19 positive inmates previously housed in the prison infirmary. One inmate who tested positive last week remains in the hospital in stable condition, with non-life-threatening conditions and not on a ventilator. One inmate who tested positive last week remains in the prison infirmary in stable condition. One inmate who tested positive last evening was taken to the hospital as a precaution for monitoring with no COVID-19 symptoms.

"Credit goes to DOC's healthcare provider Centurion for expediting delivery of the COVID-19 tests and to our dedicated team of medical professionals who tested the at-risk inmates so that we could get the results turned around in less than 20 hours," **said DOC Commissioner Claire DeMatteis**. "Had we not taken this preventative step, we may not have known for days, a week or longer, if ever, of these asymptomatic results."

With only 12 inmates who have tested positive, DeMatteis said, "It is important to keep in perspective that with 4,200 inmates under DOC custody in Level V prison facilities, three-tenths of one percent have tested positive – all contained in one housing unit at one correctional facility. None are life-threatening and eight have no symptoms."

DOC also announced today that one additional Correctional Officer has tested positive for COVID-19, bringing to 11 the total number of Correctional Officers to test positive for the illness.

A Correctional Officer, who is assigned to James T. Vaughn Correctional Center in Smyrna. The Correctional Officer was last at the facility 9 days ago, on Friday, April 3. After beginning to experience flu-like symptoms, the Officer began to self-isolate at home, and as symptoms developed the Officer sought medical attention, at which time a COVID-19 test was administered. The positive COVID-19 test result was received by the Officer on Thursday, April 9. The Officer is recovering at home at this time.

No additional information will be provided about the identity of the inmates and the Correctional Officer for privacy protection.

As part of the DOC's COVID-19 operating procedures, each DOC correctional facility has identified housing units to serve as COVID-19 isolation and treatment centers to be used as needed to house and care for inmates who have tested positive for the illness. The JTVCC COVID-19 treatment center, which is located in a vacant stand-alone building on the compound, was activated last night and is housing 9 inmates who have tested positive and do not require treatment in the prison infirmary or hospitalization. These inmates are being housed in single-bed cells and are receiving round-the-clock monitoring by healthcare and security staff. See attached photos of the JTVCC COVID-19 treatment center.

The DOC is employing a variety of prevention, screening, cleaning and containment measures to guard against the spread of the novel coronavirus, including:

- All persons, including Officers, administrative staff and Probationer, who enter any Probation and Parole Office and any person entering any Level IV violation of probation and work release and Level V prison facility are screened for COVID-19, including a series of questions and a forehead temperature check with a digital thermometer
- Staff who present with symptoms are sent home to self-quarantine and directed to contact their health care provider.
- Newly arriving inmates are held in isolation for the first 14 days, during which they are carefully monitored, including daily temperature checks with a thermometer.
- DOC has implemented extra daily cleaning of DOC facilities and is using specialized fogging machines to disinfect entire rooms of common areas, housing units and workspaces.
- Face masks are being worn by Correctional Officers and contract healthcare workers as a protection for inmates, Officers and other employees. Face masks are also being provided to inmates who are in infirmaries, those with compromised immune systems, and certain inmates with institutional jobs, including food service workers.
- Most Probationer visits with Probation Officers were transitioned to phone check-ins starting last month to support social distancing measures.

In addition, the DOC [has temporarily suspended in-person prison programming to reduce the movement of people into facilities and movement of groups of people within facilities.](#) Certain programs, including treatment and education programs and religious programming, are being transitioned to a virtual video format. Inmates continue to have outside recreation

opportunities within their confined areas and continue to have access to phones to stay in regular contact with their loved ones. DOC is also expanding the use of electronic tablets among the inmate population, where available.

Get updated information about the DOC's response to COVID-19, read previous announcements of positive COVID-19 cases and review an informational chart of positive COVID-19 cases by DOC facility by [clicking HERE](#) and visiting <https://doc.delaware.gov>, and follow *decorrection* on Facebook and Twitter.

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